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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
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TO: **Interested Parties**

FROM: **Joseph Gallant**
Secretary

RE: **Request for Information**

DATE: **February 10, 1997**

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) is pleased to submit for your consideration the attached Request for Information (RFI). EOHHS is interested in obtaining varied and creative responses by April 10, 1997, to guide the development of an integrated and coordinated system of subsidized child care services in Massachusetts and for a Request for Proposal(s) for services to implement this system. These services may include direct services, as well as administrative services.

EOHHS believes that a more cohesive child care system is important in order to promote the administration's goals for child care: To support welfare reform, economic development, early education and care of children and the well-being of families.

EOHHS has designed a process for developing and preparing a comprehensive child care plan which reflects planning for a more integrated and responsive child care system. EOHHS plans to elicit input from as many sectors and interested people as possible, including parents, child care workers and providers, members of the child care and early education community, and others serving state and private agencies.

Maintaining a diverse early education and care system that provides options for quality care requires building on a system that is developed through the use of state, private, and federal dollars. One such source of funding is the Child Care and Development Fund.

President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) on September 30, 1996, that creates a new, integrated child care program under the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

The program unites three existing child care funding streams in an effort to construct a unified, seamless child care system out of multiple programs. These new funding streams, combined to improve the quality of child care, will be known as the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).

The CCDF requires the development of a state plan that details how the funds will be distributed. This comprehensive child care plan is due by July 1, 1997, and will cover Massachusetts' integrated child care program for two years beginning on September 30, 1997. To ensure a plan that most closely addresses the needs of children and families, participation is being sought from those who deliver and advocate for the entire spectrum of children's education and care programs.

The planning process for an integrated early education and care system and the CCDF plan will include statewide forums, parent focus groups and public hearings during the months of March, April and May.

The state will convene an Interagency Task Force to ensure the quality and comprehensiveness of the planning process for the integrated and coordinated system of early education and care and the CCDF State Plan. The Task Force will include representatives from the Departments of Transitional Assistance, Mental Health, Social Services, Mental Retardation, Public Health, Education, and the Office for Children.

An Advisory Committee will also be formed and will include child care teachers and directors, Head Start personnel, local public school staff, family day care providers, parents and employers.

Providing quality and accessible programs to families will be an integral component of a good State early education and care system. All of us working together will play a very important role in delivering services to families and children, and will strengthen the process and outcomes for the Commonwealth.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
FEBRUARY 10, 1997

INTRODUCTION

Massachusetts' comprehensive child care system is an essential service for families and the communities of the Commonwealth. Child Care continues to be the key element in supporting growth in the work force and for providing a self-sufficiency track for welfare recipients. Child Care is an early childhood education program offering a way to deliver comprehensive services for young children. In Massachusetts child care is provided in family day care homes, as part of a system or independent, and in for-profit and non-profit center based agencies. Services are available for children ranging in age from 1 month to 14 years as well as for before and after school care and to teen parents and their children.

Child Care purchased through the Massachusetts subsidized child care system represents about 20% of all licensed and regulated child care in the Commonwealth. Child Care issues cut across several secretariats and are on the agenda of a number of state agencies, the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), and the Office for Children (OFC). The child care system is supported by funding streams that include state funding, federal funding, local government, private employers, foundations, charities and parents.

A Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCRA) is a community-based non-profit agency that provides voucher management services, information and referral services, recruitment, training and technical assistance to providers.

There are 13 local service delivery areas for child care information and referral in Massachusetts, each of which is served by a different CCRA. These agencies provide support for parents, training and technical assistance for child care providers, and community education.

Options for payment mechanisms for subsidized child care include contracts and vouchers. The state funds the following types of contracted care:

- **Basic child care** is a service primarily for children of low income families whose parents work or attend training. Families access the service by applying to the providers directly.

- **Family Preservation child care** provides basic child care as well as on site social services and transportation for children with protective needs. Families with these service needs are referred for child care through the Department of Social Services.

The state funds the following types of voucher child care:

- ESP vouchers are for children whose parents work or attend an education or training program and are determined eligible for child care by a DTA local office and then referred to the CCRA in their area.

- Income eligible vouchers are provided for low-income families who need child care to maintain or obtain employment. Families eligible for income eligible vouchers seek referrals from their local CCRA's.

- In home/relative voucher child care is for ESP participants and transitional consumers who have their children cared for by either a relative or by a non-relative in the child's home.

The Office for Children is the state agency that licenses child care centers and family day care homes. They also coordinate and facilitate training for promoting professional standards.

EOHHS is interested in creating a better integrated and coordinated system of subsidized child care. The intent of such a system would be to create an infra-structure for the subsidized child care system and reduce overlap by consolidating a series of disparate parts. The goal of this system is to use all of our resources to develop a coordinated and integrated system which is quality based and responsive to the needs of all consumers.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

EOHHS intends to use the information gathered in response to this RFI to develop the state plan for the Child Care and Development Fund and a Request for Proposal to be released in FY'98.

INSTRUCTIONS

Interested parties may respond to any or all of the questions in this RFI in person at the statewide forums or parent focus groups to be held during the months of March and April or by preparing a written response to the inquiries. Completed responses must be legible, typewritten is preferred, and shall be submitted with the attached cover sheet (see cover sheet instructions for submission by diskette or electronic mail) completed and received by EOHHS no later than April 10, 1997 and addressed to:

Nancy Schwachter
Coordinator of Child Care Policy
EOHHS
One Ashburton Place, Room 1109
Boston, MA 02108

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Early education and care programs will be a critical support for children and families as the responsibility for welfare programs has moved from the federal level to the state level. As we begin the planning process in Massachusetts and support collaboration between the state and local communities, consider the following principles as you respond to this RFI:

- Building capacity to ensure quality, supply, and system support;
- Expanding assistance to families to pay for services;
- Developing linkages to promote comprehensive services that support families;
- Leveraging private sector support to build resources; and
- Evaluating resources, needs, and progress.

QUESTIONS:

WHAT WORKS, WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS, WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS ?

AREAS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION AND RESPONSE:

- **ACCESSIBILITY**
  How accessible is the current child care system?
  Is there enough child care in your area?
  What is the need? For what ages? For what times?
  Are there special needs of children or parents that makes the current system inaccessible to families?
  What role can local government play in developing more child care?
  What could the State Plan do to help to ensure that there is enough child care in your area?
- **AFFORDABILITY**
  Are there families in your area that need child care and can't afford it?
  What could be done to make child care more affordable?
  What percent of their income do you think families can afford to pay for child care?
  Should parent fees be based on per cent of family income or per cent of cost of care?
- **TRAINING RESOURCES**
  Are family child care providers trained enough?
  Are center-based child care providers trained enough?
  What kind of training is needed? Courses? Workshops? Topics?
  What kind of training would attract more people into the field?
  What kind of training would keep people in the field?
  How does training happen where you work?

How is the training funded? Is training affordable?
Is there training coordination among child care providers, preschool, early intervention and Head Start providers?

- **LICENSING**
  Centers are licensed. Does that give you a sense that it is safe and of high quality?
  How would you improve licensing standards?
  Has licensing effected the services you provide?
  What role do licensing standards play in ensuring quality in your program?
  What role do program standards or purchase of service standards play in ensuring quality?
  How is compliance ensured?
  Do you think the current licensing is adequate? Why or why not?
  Why do some families choose unlicensed care?
  Do you think registering family child care homes is enough?
- **QUALITY**
  How is the quality of child care?
  What could be done to improve quality?
  What is the most important characteristic of quality that you look for in child care?
  What affects the quality of a program?
  How should programs be monitored for program quality and outcomes for children?
- **SUPPORT SERVICES**
  Do you think that services or information about services should be offered at child care programs?
  (i.e. social services, health services, transportation, special education, support groups, training, etc.)
- **FAMILY CHILD CARE SYSTEMS**
  What should systems offer providers?
  What should systems offer families?
  What policies should be standard and regulated for all systems?
- **COORDINATION**
  Is the child care system coordinated?
  Is there coordination between the public schools and the child care system?
  What could be done to make the child care/public schools more coordinated?
  When a child needs to move from one child care program to another(due to age, moving, etc.) can it happen easily?
  What could happen in your community to enhance coordination of the child care system?
  Are Head Start and other early childhood programs coordinated with child care programs?
  What could the state do to enhance coordination of child care resources in the community?
- **SPACE**
  What are the barriers to providing space in public schools to run child care programs?
  What are the barriers to sharing space with community based child care programs?
  What can be done to provide affordable space for child care centers?
- **SALARIES/BENEFITS**
  What benefits are currently offered at your agency?
  paid vacation; paid holiday; paid sick days; pension plan; health insurance; paid training
  Can staff be recruited and retained for the current salaries and benefits?

- **PARENTS**

  If your parent fee increased would that affect your current child care arrangement?
  What options for child care do you have other than what you are currently using?
  How should parent fees be determined?
  Do you use the kind of child care that you prefer?
  What, if anything, prevents you from getting the child care that you want?
  Were you on a waiting list before your present child care arrangement?
  If you were on a waiting list, how long did you wait and what did you do during that time?
  Why did you choose your child care?
  If you reached the income ceiling for subsidized child care, what options do you have to increase your income?
  Does your child receive special attention or accommodations if he or she needs it?
  Are there good choices of child care in your community?
  Do you have back-up child care arrangements in an emergency?
  How does your child do in his/her child care setting?
  Why do you like or not like your current child care arrangement?
  How do you know if your child is happy in child care?
  What would you change, if anything, about your child care?

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. What role can public schools play in a comprehensive system of early childhood services?
2. What is the best way for public schools to work with other providers and agencies in providing this comprehensive system?
3. What are the benefits to public schools of providing comprehensive early childhood services?
4. What are the barriers to public schools in providing comprehensive early childhood services?

BUSINESS COMMUNITY/EMPLOYERS

1. What role can the business community and/or employers play in the development of the early education and care system?
2. How can public funds be used to leverage private contributions and involvement from the private sector?

PROVIDERS/WORKERS

1. What do you think the State child care system could do to help you do your job better?
2. What could your center/agency do to help you do your job better?
3. What involvement do parents have in your program?
4. What role could State agencies play in helping you to do your job better?

CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL AGENCIES

1. What is your current role in the child care system?
2. What would you like to see your role be in the State child care system?
3. What issues do you encounter to do your job effectively?
4. Should the CCRA's become lead agencies and serve as a 'hub' for expanding, supporting and linking all early childhood services that families and children need?
5. Can CCRA's become lead agencies and provide services as well?

REIMBURSEMENT RATES

1. What are the major costs at your center/program?
2. What effect do the current reimbursement rates/parent fees have on your program?
3. Should accredited programs be reimbursed higher than other licensed providers?
4. Are there certain services which require higher rates (flexible hours child care, family preservation, special needs, etc.)?
5. Should the state pay a single rate for each type of child care service e.g. family, group etc.? Please explain your point of view.

STATEWIDE COMMUNITY FORUMS AND PARENT FOCUS GROUPS

A series of forums and focus groups are being held around the State to offer an opportunity for all interested parties to speak on early education and care issues by responding to this RFI. The forums and focus groups, organized by EOHHS and facilitated in some areas by the CCRA's, are designed to gather input to be used in planning a better integrated and coordinated early education and care system in Massachusetts and also for the State Plan for the Child Care and Development Fund.

DATES, TIMES, LOCATIONS FOR STATEWIDE FORUMS/FOCUS GROUPS

March 19, 1997	**Wednesday**	**5:00-7:00 p.m.**
	Location	**Worcester State Hospital** **305 Belmont Street** **Worcester**
March 24, 1997	**Monday**	**6:00-8:00 p.m.**
	Location	**North Shore Community College** **Lynn Campus** **300 Broad Street** **Lynn**
March 26, 1997	**Wednesday**	**6:00-8:00 p.m.**
	Location	**Holyoke Community College** **303 Homestead Avenue** **Holyoke**
April 7, 1997	**Monday**	**6:00-8:00 p.m.**
	Location	**Bridgewater State College** **Bridgewater**
April 9, 1997	**Wednesday**	**6:00-8:00 p.m.**
	Location	**UMass Boston** **100 Morrissey Blvd.** **Boston**

If you are unable to attend any of the statewide forums or focus groups, interested parties are encouraged to submit your written comments directly to: Nancy Schwachter, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, One Ashburton Place, Room 1109, Boston, Ma 02108. Responses to this RFI must be submitted with the attached cover sheet and received no later than April 10, 1997.

For any special accommodation requests needed to attend the statewide forums, please call Sandra Osgood at (617) 727-0077 within 48 hours of the forum you wish to attend.

RFI FORUMS/FOCUS GROUPS

LOCATIONS AND PARKING INSTRUCTIONS

March 19
5:00 - 7:00

Worcester State Hospital - Bryan Building
Chapel (forum)
Flower Room (parent focus group)
Park in visitor parking

March 24
6:00 - 8:00

North Shore Community College - Lynn Campus
Lynn MBTA Conference Room (forum)
T105 (parent focus group)
No special parking indicated

March 26
6:00 - 8:00

Holyoke Community College - Campus Center
Cafeteria - Rooms G216 & G217
Park in lots indicated E, D, or C

April 7
6:00 - 8:00

Bridgewater State College
Maxwell Library Lecture Hall (forum)
Heritage Room (parent focus group)
Park in Lower Great Hill Parking lot - shuttle buses will be available

April 9
6:00 -8:00

University of Massachusetts, Boston - University Club, Healey Library
Public transportation available by MBTA then shuttle buses
Parking at UMass - $3.50

COVER SHEET FOR RFI WRITTEN RESPONSES

DATE:_____

NAME:_____

PHONE:_____

ADDRESS:_____

_____

_____

AFFILIATION:_____

INSTRUCTIONS

All written responses to this Request for Information must be submitted with this cover sheet. Responses must be legible, typewritten is preferred. Responses may also be submitted on a diskette on any major word processing program or electronically by using the following address: NSchwachter@state.ma.us.

Completed responses shall be received by EOHHS no later than April 10, 1997, and addressed to:

Nancy Schwachter
EOHHS
One Ashburton Place, Room 1109
Boston, MA 02108